

## **Training Young Athletes 12-15 Year Olds**

By Susan Ellis

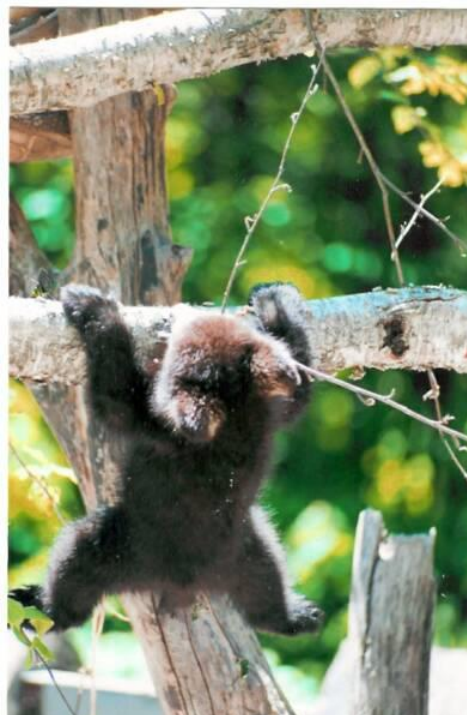
This is the second in a series on Youth Training. Last month you were introduced to the basic training model and some recommendations for training for really young kids under 12. If you haven't read it yet I would suggest you go back and read Training Young Athletes Under 12 – May 2008. It is important to read the articles suggested in the tip to fully understand the training model.

The overall development model is important to understanding what children need at the different stages of development for long term success, and to avoid burning out your child before they ever reach their full potential. It is equally important to note that not all kids develop at the same rate and the age categories suggested may vary to each child.

In the first two stages of development you learned that overall sport development through fun, games, and other sports helped to develop the ABCs of athleticism (Agility, Balance, Coordination, Speed).

In this third stage of development (12-15) kids need to continue the foundational work laid in the first two stages, but now they can start to work more on skating specific aspects of training such as endurance training (aerobic capacity), strength training, as well as continuing speed training.

Sports such as soccer, lacrosse and field hockey are still very good for endurance training, as well as having the speed, agility, and coordination components. Inlining is great for endurance and is very sport specific. Cycling and rowing, while not quite as specific as inlining, promote endurance and strength. Cross country running, while lacking in specificity, develops overall cardiovascular endurance. Hockey is also still a great cross training sport. Even though the skates are not the same, the technique is similar, and it also teaches good balance, coordination, visual and spatial awareness, and has a speed and endurance component. The team sports mentioned here also help to work the aerobic power system, which becomes more important to train as the athlete nears their peak height and their growth spurts have slowed down. Of course, what you get out of it depends on what position you play, how good or bad your team is, and how much effort you put in to it. I had an athlete who told me how much soccer he played and I was really impressed that a kid could do that much and still skate and go to school and have any energy... until I found out he played goal. Not to say that goalies don't work hard too, but that's not really what I had in mind.



Australian Chin Up Champion

Depending on how much time is devoted to other endurance sports, athletes should spend some time developing aerobic capacity on their own. If the other sport only covers 2-3 days a week, then an extra day or two of endurance work is needed. Or if the sport does not contribute enough to the aerobic system in each practice or game, the athlete needs to spend some extra time on it on their own.

Specific strength training should begin during this stage. In this case, by specific, I don't mean specific to skating, but overall body strength training. (Read Youth Strength Training – May 2004) Developing overall body strength lays the foundation for more specific skating strength training to be done in the later stages of training. Gone are the days when skaters only trained the lower body and walked around looking like tooth picks set on tree stumps. Today's skater needs upper body strength and core strength to be successful.

In the early stages of strength training free body weight exercises are fine. There are several free body strength programs (and training programs) listed on <http://speedskatenb.ca/training-programs/>.

If you have access to a good gym with a good instructor trained in adolescent strength training you can start to learn how to do strength training with light weights. It is as important to learn proper technique in strength training, as it is in skating or any other sport, to have maximum results from your work and to avoid injury. Crossfit for Kids is a good place for kids to start to learn strength training, coordination, agility, etc. You can check your local Crossfit gym to see if programs for kids are available there.

As these are the rapid growth years extra attention should be given to flexibility training. Bones are growing at a faster rate than tendons, ligaments and muscles, sometimes creating tightness, imbalances, and instability and awkwardness. Always start and finish each session with flexibility training and throw in an extra 30' session at least once or more per week.

Below is a sample program for a 12-15 year old. Keep in mind it is only a sample and each child in this age group is different. You can have a 12 year old 4'5" boy within a very early stage of puberty and a 12 year old 5'8" boy who is well into puberty. The two are very different in their stage of development!

"Early maturing boys could have as much as a 4 year physiological advantage over late maturers." LTAD SSC

Monday:

- Run 45-60' P=max – 50-60, plus 15' flexibility
- Build this up to a maximum of 60' over the summer.

Tuesday:

- 20' warm up, including jogging, calisthenics, jumps
- Strength training, either free body or with light weights
- 10' warm down jog plus stretch

Wednesday:

- Warm up: 10' jogging, 5' stretching, 3 x 10" second sprints
- Aerobic Power running intervals: 2 x 3 x 2' r 2' R 6' @ 80% intensity
- 10' warm down jog, plus stretch
- Build this up to 2 x 5 x 2' or 2 x 4 x 3' over the summer and build intensity to 85%.
- In June start doing  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the time in skating imitations and build this up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  the time over the summer. So  $\frac{1}{2}$  the program is running and  $\frac{1}{2}$  is imitations.

Thursday:

- Bike 60' – Keep cadence up at least to 90 rpm, plus 15' flexibility
- Build this up to 90' over the summer.

Friday:

- 20' warm up, including jogging, calisthenics, jumps
- Strength training, either free body or with light weights
- 10' warm down jog plus stretch

Saturday:

- Warm up: 10' jogging, 5' stretching, 5 x 8 second sprints
- Aerobic Power running or cycling intervals: 3 x 8' r 5' (walk or cycle easy for rest) – intensity is the highest you can sustain over the course of the 3 intervals without losing speed
- 10' warm down jog, plus stretch
- Build this up to 3 x 10' or 5 x 8' over the summer.
  
- Extra flexibility session of 30'

Sunday:

- Rest day (very important!)

Training program codes:

60' is 60 minutes ( ' )

60" is 60 seconds ( " )

P=max – 50-60 is your maximum heart rate minus 50 to 60 beats, i.e.: max HR = 210 so working pulse in this training is 160 to 150 beats per minute.

2 x 3 x 2' r 2' R 6' @ 80% intensity is: 2 sets of 3 repetitions, each repetition is 2 minutes long with a 2 minute rest in between each and a set rest of 6 minutes after the first 3 reps. The intensity should be around 80% perceived effort.

If you're just dusting off the cobwebs and just now starting your summer training program, go easy! Start out with 30' easy running instead of 45' and just build your time up. It's a long summer, but if you start now, you won't be behind.

Now, what if you are playing other sports as well? You certainly don't want to add another training on top of your other aerobic sport, otherwise you'll get burned out. You can easily sub your aerobic sport in place of one of the aerobic trainings. You'll have to be the judge if your sport activity really did equal the training you needed to do or not. I don't really think a baseball game playing outfield is equivalent to a 45' run, but if you were playing catcher it may equal some of the leg strength work for the day. And sometimes practices are really hard and you do a lot of running, and other times they are more skill based (kicking the soccer ball) and you are running less. Don't fool yourself! Take 20' worth of laps around the field after practice to make up the difference so you get it done right then and there. Do the work you honestly think needs to be done and you will reap the rewards!

Next month: Training for 16 and up